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NEWS

Winchester man swims the English Channel

JOYCE WESTNER | STAFF WRITER

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Winchester native Sean Bannon has become the 1,910th person to swim the English Channel. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOYCE WESTNER

Sean Bannon can now add English Channel swimmer to his resume.

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The Winchester native on June 29 became the 1,910th person to swim the English Channel after spending 15 hours in cold, jellyfish-filled water.

Winchester native Sean Bannon swims across the English Channel in June. COURTESY PHOTO/SEAN BANNON

The 22-year-old had just graduated from UMass Amherst and has been a swimmer since he was about 5.

While at Winchester High School, Bannon and his friends wanted to lift weights, but COVID closed the gyms and he looked for a sport which didn't need a gym. He started by doing an Ironman Triathlon — a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bicycle ride and 26.22 miles of running for a total of 140.6 miles.

"I was the only 19-year-old in that race," Bannon said.

He was inspired by his uncle who was a paraplegic from a young

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"I realized early that having a healthy, able body is a privilege," he added.

A look at the English Channel. COURTESY PHOTO/WORLDATLAS.COM

But when he set his mind on swimming the Channel, "my parents thought I was insane," Bannon said.

"It's the Mt. Everest of swimming," he added. "And just like that climb, you can see the top, or the coast of France, but the real race starts when you're 90% done. That's the hardest part."

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The process

Bannon said the process involves applying for a slot to swim the English Channel, to the tune of $1,000. He was given a range from June 29 through July 4, and fortunately the weather was good on the first day.

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Most of his family and several friends went with him, but his seasick mother stayed in England while his dad and other folks went in a charter boat near him, dropping food over the side and keeping an eye on him.

Once a swimmer enters the water, Bannon said they also pay $3,000 with no refunds even if they stop 10 minutes later. He started swimming at 3 a.m. in the dark and he was startled when a jellyfish floated by, fortunately not stinging him.

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Winchester native Sean Bannon gives a thumbs up after swimming the English Channel on June 29, 2024. COURTESY PHOTO/ SEAN BANNON

"Five people entered that day, three dropped out, and a woman finished three hours after me," Bannon said.

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Although the direct distance is about 22 miles, currents of the channel move the swimmers around and they end up going up to 35 miles.

“Swimmers can end up either on a French beach or at a rocky cliff,” explained Bannon, “but I reached rocks. I had to stand up, tough to do on slippery rocks after 15 hours of not standing, and wave my arms. Then I swam to the charter boat’s dinghy and got taken on board,”

And what’s Bannon doing lately?

“First, I’m losing the 30 pounds of blubber I had to put on before the swim — fat is more buoyant than muscle and it also keeps you warm,” he said.

Bannon is hoping to become a doctor and currently works at Mass. General Hospital as a cancer research coordinator. He’ll take the MCAT exam in January.

Meanwhile he’s training for the Triple Crown of Open Water Swimming — a marathon swimming challenge that involves completing three historically significant swims — the English Channel, the Catalina Channel (a 20.2-mile swim between Catalina Island and the California mainland) and the 20 Bridges Swim (a 30.1-mile circumnavigation of Manhattan Island in New York City.)

Bannon is planning the Catalina Island challenge next August, and eventually take on the 20 Bridges Swim.

If that’s not enough, Bannon said he wants do the Arch to Arc Triathlon, which only 53 athletes have completed, the youngest of whom was 25, so Bannon knows he’d better get a move on. He’ll train all winter, swimming in Mystic Lakes in a wet suit.

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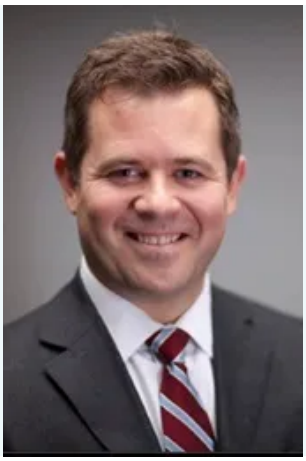

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Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

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Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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